

# Department of Human Services

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## Girls' fear delays hearing in abuse and torture case

**Twins, 8, were to face Warren mom**

**BY CHRISTY ARBOSCELLO**

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

*December 20, 2006*

The 8-year-old twin girls whose adoptive mother is accused of torturing them were not ready to face her in a Warren court Tuesday.

As they were ushered into 37th District Court, the taller twin, in pink, clung to a social worker and sniffled. Her sister, with white beads dangling from her braids, froze in front of the stand where she was to testify.

Jennifer Andary, of the Macomb County Prosecutor's Office, bent down and rubbed her back, whispering what seemed to be words of encouragement. But the task was too overwhelming for the girls, who prosecutors say endured abuse at the hands of 30-year-old Tamika Williams of Warren.

Her preliminary exam on two counts of torture and two counts of child abuse was adjourned to Jan. 9. The judge ruled for the exam to take place in a closed courtroom, to the dismay -- but not the objection -- of defense lawyer Ronald Goldstein.

"There is no way they are prepared to proceed today," Judge Dawnn Gruenburg told the court after speaking with the girls privately.



Tamika Williams

A shackled Williams, who teared up in court, tried to make eye contact with the girls, but they kept their gaze to the floor.

Under Goldstein's advisement, Williams' family members didn't comment for this article. One of Williams' supporters wore a T-shirt that declared "Not Guilty" above the defendant's picture and "She's Innocent!" on the back.

Goldstein would not comment on the details of the case, but reiterated that his client pleaded not guilty. When asked about the girls' behavior, he said, "The atmosphere in the courtroom is quite different from being in the playfield."

On Nov. 22, Williams was arrested and charged with abusing the girls at her home on Toepfer. Police were called to investigate after a teacher at Warrendale Elementary School in Warren saw marks on the girls.

According to court records, Williams burned the twins with cigarette lighters, stabbed them with glass and knives and beat them with exercise equipment. They said she also choked them with a belt and bound them with rope.

In court filings, Williams said the girls hurt themselves and that she didn't notice the burns and bruises that investigators said covered the girls "from head to toe."

The girls are now in foster care.

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December 20, 2006

## Scared kids can't testify

Judge postpones hearing in torture, abuse case

Edward L. Cardenas / The Detroit News

**WARREN** -- The 8-year-old twin girls with the braided hair and blue jeans looked tense and scared Tuesday as they approached the witness stand.

They were supposed to tell the court about the adoptive mother who police say abused and tortured them -- but they didn't make it.

Although they were shielded by child protective service workers, they were too frightened of Tamika Williams sitting nearby to take the stand, prosecutors say.

Because of that, Williams' preliminary exam was adjourned Tuesday by 37th District Judge Dawnn Gruenburg.

"This is the very woman who threatened to kill these little girls," Macomb Assistant Prosecutor Jennifer Andary said.

"The impact these girls will have on the case is great. They will tell just how bad they suffered at the hands of the defendant."

Gruenburg, who met with the girls and both attorneys in her chambers, determined that the girls would not be able to testify Tuesday. She adjourned the case until Jan. 9, when she will close the courtroom for the testimony.

Williams, 30, will continue to be held in the Macomb County Jail on \$1 million bond. She is accused of abusing the two girls she adopted in 2005 from a foster care home in Southfield. Authorities allege they suffered bruises, welts and cigarette burns.

While Gruenburg met with the lawyers and the girls, Williams sat alone at the defendants' table, shaking her head "no" and wiping away tears.

In the audience, family members gathered to support Williams, including one member of the family who wore a T-shirt with her image and the statement "not guilty."

Following the proceedings, family members left the court without comment.

Williams was arrested Nov. 22. The girls were enrolled in the third grade in the East Detroit school district in February, and school officials said there was no indication of abuse before the teachers' first report Nov. 15.

State officials removed the Williams girls from Warrendale Elementary School on Nov. 16. They are now in a foster home.

Williams is only the second person in Michigan to be charged with torture, according to Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith. She faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted of child abuse, and could face life if convicted of torture.

Defense Attorney Ronald Goldstein said the ordeal has been tough on Williams.

"She is having a hard time being away from her children," said Goldstein. He added he was not surprised by the girls' response to being in court: "The atmosphere of being in the courtroom is different than being on the playground."

Andary said the girls are "thriving" in foster care "now that they are out of the hands of this sadistic woman."

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## 'Terrified' twins unable to testify

Adoptive mother accused of torturing girls, 8

PUBLISHED: December 20, 2006

By Norb Franz  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Two 8-year-old girls appeared too frightened Tuesday to testify against their adoptive mother, forcing a delay in the case of the Warren woman charged with torturing and abusing them.

The twins clung to social workers, who held the girls closely while escorting them into a Warren courtroom for the preliminary hearing for their adoptive mother, Tamika Shuntell Williams.

Police and prosecutors allege Williams, 30, beat her adopted daughters with a baseball bat and exercise equipment, tied them to a door with ropes and burned them with cigarettes and a lighter. Officials claim Williams threatened to hunt down the twins and kill them if they ever told anyone about the alleged abuse.

Longtime law enforcers have said the alleged acts may be the most disturbing case of child abuse they have seen.

One of the girls -- The Macomb Daily is not publishing their names -- froze in her steps just short of the witness stand Tuesday before 37th District Judge Dawnn Gruenburg and about 15 feet from Williams.

Macomb County assistant prosecutor Jennifer Andary tried to comfort the girl by gently rubbing her back, until officials decided to remove both girls from the courtroom that also included court personnel, reporters and news photographers and nearly one dozen of Williams' relatives, including her parents.

Attorneys on both sides of the case then met privately with Gruenburg in the judge's chambers. While waiting, Williams sporadically shook her head, hung her head, looked at the ceiling and wiped her eyes.

"Don't cry, Tamika," said her father, Mitchell Lesueur.

Gruenburg announced a postponement of the case following the closed-door discussion with the lawyers.

"It's obvious to me speaking to these children they are in no way prepared to testify," the judge said. Without elaborating, Gruenburg said she will close the courtroom when the girls are scheduled to return to testify Jan. 9.

Williams wept as a Macomb County Sheriff's deputy escorted her from the courtroom.

The Warren woman, who is single, adopted the twins in the spring of 2005. She faces two counts each of torture -- an offense punishable by up to life in prison -- and first-degree child abuse, a 15-year felony.

Williams remains in the Macomb County Jail in lieu of \$1 million bond.

Her parents insist she is not guilty and describe her as a loving woman.

"She's having a very hard time being away from her children," defense attorney Ronald Goldstein told reporters outside the courtroom. Asked how his client could explain the bruises and marks on the girls' bodies, he replied: "Let's leave that for the trial."

Andary, who heads the domestic violence unit at the Macomb County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, described the offenses carried out against the twins as "sadistic." She acknowledged the personal accounts of the twins are crucial to the prosecution's case.

"The impact the girls will have at this stage is great. They will tell just how they suffered at the hands of the defendant," Andary said.

"They are terrified."

Suspicion the girls were abused began last month, when teachers at Warrendale Elementary School noticed a burn on one of the girl's arms and a bruise on her sister. Macomb County Child Protective Services removed the girls from their home and contacted the Warren Police Department. Police subsequently arrested Williams at her home on Toepfer.

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December 20, 2006

## Ricky's burial still unsettled

Gary Heinlein / Detroit News Lansing Bureau

**LANSING** -- Almost a year after his remains were found in a lonely marsh, Ingham County officials are striving to untangle legal complications that have prevented Ricky Holland from receiving a proper burial.

Among the issues: lack of someone to act as legal guardian for the arrangements, now that Ricky's adoptive parents are imprisoned for murdering him. Authorities still have custody of the 7-year-old boy's skeletal remains, found decomposed in plastic bags more than six months after he disappeared.

"I'm waiting for the court to give me some direction on this, given all the legal tangles," Ingham County Medical Examiner Dean Sienko said Tuesday.

A funeral home and cemetery have offered their services for free, but it may be necessary for a court to decide who has the authority to approve arrangements and other issues.

Ricky's mother, Lisa Holland, must serve a life sentence for his murder. She is appealing her conviction.

His father, Tim Holland, has to serve 30-60 years. He pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in the little boy's death.

His grandparents would have the right to make funeral plans, except that's uncertain under a state law that automatically forfeits the rights of Ricky's parents.

"Does that statute also operate to cut off the rights of the grandparents? We don't know," said Ingham County Prosecutor Stewart Dunnings III. "There's no law on this."

*The Associated Press contributed to this report. You can reach Gary Heinlein at (313) 222-2470 or [gheinlein@detnews.com](mailto:gheinlein@detnews.com).*

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## Former runaways thriving in new family

News Makers '06

### FLINT

#### THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Wednesday, December 20, 2006

By Ron Fonger

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FLINT - With two sheets of notebook paper, a pen and a story no one knew better, Natasha Sawyers wrote her way off the streets and into a real home, bringing her little sister along with her.

The Sawyers sisters - now 16 and 15 - had been on the run for months from state-sanctioned foster homes when Natasha read in the June 4 Flint Journal about herself, Ashley and 17 other children considered missing from foster care in Genesee County.

The Journal later published parts of Natasha's letter with an article about the girls' plight. By early July, the sisters had come out of hiding and been placed with a friend's family, where they remain today.

The teenagers are leading "normal" lives as Flint School District students and aren't interested in continuing to draw attention to their story, said Jatasha L. Haralson, who took the girls into her home on Flint's west side more than five months ago.

"Life at my home has changed, and it has been a challenge, but if I had this to do all over again, I definitely would," Haralson wrote in an e-mail Monday to The Journal.

"Emotionally, it has been a roller coaster, but nothing good ever really comes easy. I prepare myself daily with a lot of prayer. With three teenage daughters, a pre-teen son and a 5-year-old, I really have to be prepared to encounter almost anything."

Natasha's letter about life as a runaway struck a chord with Journal readers, including Family Court Judge Duncan M. Beagle, who responded with his own open letter to the girls, promising them placement in a good home, a chance to return to school and no punishment for having run away.

Beagle's plea to the sisters also was published in The Journal.

Haralson said Natasha's wish of going to college is within reach, and with work, she's become more comfortable in school.

Ashley also has done well, with a 2.8 grade-point average - "pretty good for a student who has missed so much school in the past," Haralson said. "She studies regularly, and I expect that she will keep up the good work."

Runaway foster children continue to be a problem here and elsewhere in Michigan. As of Tuesday, eight children were considered missing in the county, down from 13 at the start of November.

Four of the eight currently missing have run away at least once before, said Reemus Holbrook, director of juvenile casework services for Genesee County Circuit Court.

Children are placed in foster care after being removed from their homes because of abuse or neglect.

"When we figure out how to solve everybody's problems, maybe we'll be able to get down to zero,"

Holbrook said. "We do the best we can."

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Amber Alert successfully locates 3 Gaylord children

By Michael Jones, Staff writer

GAYLORD - Approximately five hours after issuing an Amber Alert for three Gaylord children Tuesday the Gaylord Michigan State Police (MSP) post said the alert was canceled after the children had been found safe in the Detroit area with their parents.

The Gaylord post reportedly contacted MSP officials in Lansing around 3 p.m. requesting the alert be issued after they had been contacted by a caseworker from the Otsego County Dept. of Human Services (DHS) who had concerns the children might be harmed by their parents.

The parents, a 21-year-old Gaylord woman and her 42-year-old boyfriend, also from Gaylord, had allegedly threatened to harm the children, a 3-year-old girl, a 2-year-old boy and a 4-month-old girl, in the past. The couple is scheduled to appear in court Tuesday for a neglect hearing before Judge Michael K. Cooper.

The woman is also expected to be arraigned Wednesday at 1:30 p.m. on a separate misdemeanor charge of domestic violence committed against her boyfriend. Otsego County prosecutor Kyle Legel said there had been a no contact order issued in which the woman was not to see her boyfriend.

According to Legel, in light of the fact the two were located together Tuesday night around 7:47 p.m. by officers from the River Rouge police department, the woman's bond would likely be revoked at Wednesday's arraignment.

Because the parents still had custody of the children Legel said he was not aware of any charges which might be forthcoming as a result of the alert being issued Tuesday.

Sgt. Dave Hart at the Gaylord post said the children had last been seen in Gaylord Monday night with their parents prior to the alert being issued. Because the couple still had custody of the children the incident was not considered an abduction, according to Hart.

Legel said once the family had been located by the River Rouge police the children were taken into custody by the Wayne County DHS until they were able to be transported back to Otsego County by workers from the DHS in Gaylord.

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## Jury weighs Ohio caged kids case

NORWALK, Ohio Jurors will resume deliberations today in the case of an Ohio couple who made some of their eleven adoptive children sleep in cages.

They deliberated about two hours Tuesday over whether the special-needs children were kept in cages at night out of cruelty -- or for their own good.

Sharen and Michael Gravelle each face misdemeanor counts of child abuse and felony or misdemeanor counts of child endangering. They face as much as five years in prison if convicted.

In closing arguments, a defense attorney said the eleven children were often very difficult, relieved themselves all around the house, and were prone to violent behavior. Another attorney added that there had been no evidence that any children were ever physically harmed.

But prosecutors say even difficult children don't deserve to be put in "cages or boxes."

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# **Volunteers sought to serve on Foster Care Review Board**

Ironwood Daily Globe

Published Tuesday, December 19, 2006 3:57:07 PM Central Time

LANSING -- The State Court Administrative Office of the Michigan Supreme Court is seeking volunteers to serve on the Foster Care Review Board.

The board was created in 1984 to improve children's foster care programs through the state utilizing citizen review boards.

The five to seven member boards meet one day each month to review a representative sample cases of children who have been removed from their homes and placed in foster care due to abuse or neglect. At these reviews, board members interview parents, foster parents, case workers, attorneys, and other interested parties who may be involved in planning for the ward.

Advisory recommendations are formulated and mailed to the court, child welfare agency, prosecuting attorney, parents and other interested parties.

The purpose of the review is to ensure that all agencies, including the court, have established a plan for the ward and progress is being made toward achieving permanency and that the children are being well cared for while in the foster care system.

The Foster Review Boards are comprised of citizens who reflect a broad cross section of their communities. The program is seeking volunteers who have demonstrated leadership in other settings. Minorities and men are especially encouraged to apply. Employees of the Department of Human Services, family court, or private child placement agencies are prohibited by law to serve on Foster Care Review Boards.

Those selected must attend a scheduled review in their county in March 2007 and a two-day orientation training in Lansing April 19-20, 2007. Yearly training will ensue.

Members of multi-county boards would be required to travel to several different locations for board reviews, once a month.

Interested individuals should call (989) 732-0494. The deadline for receiving applications is Jan. 15, 2007.

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Article published Dec 20, 2006

Breaking with domestic abuse never is an easy proposition

After years in the campaign against domestic violence, I continue to hear the same question posed to me again and again: Why would someone stay in an abusive relationship?

For someone who has been lucky enough never to experience domestic violence, the question of why an abuse victim stays with her abuser is one of the most difficult to comprehend.

When a victim of domestic violence decides to leave her abuser, she is usually making the choice between her safety (and her children's safety) and housing and financial stability.

Many times, her only option if she leaves her home is to enter a shelter for domestic violence victims - if that shelter is not already full. Such shelters are for temporary respite only. Once there, the degree to which a victim of domestic violence is economically dependent upon her partner is a key factor in whether or not she feels she can make it on her own.

When moving out on her own, a domestic-violence victim may face complex barriers to finding and maintaining safe and affordable housing. Like many of us, battered women may face issues of substance abuse or mental illness. Some may have cognitive or physical disabilities - often times stemming from the violence they have been subjected to.

When a battered woman is killed by her abuser, it is most likely to have occurred after a separation. When a breakup happens against an abuser's will, he may define his ex-partner's decision as a provocative declaration of independence and go to extreme lengths to maintain control over her.

Few abusers readily allow themselves to be left and as a result often move to their "end game." That may include threatening suicide, threatening to kidnap or take custody of the children, threatening or assaulting anyone who is trying to help his partner leave, stalking, sexually assaulting his former partner with the aim of getting her pregnant, trashing her belongings, disabling her car and threatening to kill her and the children.

Leaving is a process. It requires strategic safety planning and legal intervention to avert separation violence and to safeguard victims and their children. Safe Horizons helps victims of domestic violence create fluid safety plans as a first step toward this process.

To end domestic violence in our community, we can start by rejecting violence whenever we see it - in our friends, our co-workers, our families and in ourselves.

We can respect the integrity and authority of each battered woman over her own life choices. We can believe people who tell us they are being abused, support them emotionally and provide them with appropriate and accurate referrals for help. We can learn about the dynamics of domestic violence. It is impossible to truly help someone to find her best path forward unless you have a realistic grasp of the complicated set of choices that face her.

A community working together to end domestic violence does make a difference. If you, or someone you know, is experiencing domestic abuse, please call the Safe Horizons' 24-hour crisis line at (810) 985-5538.

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# **Leadership Gladwin County learns about community and health**

Gladwin County Record

GLADWIN COUNTY — The fourth series of Leadership Gladwin County was recently held at Mid Michigan Community Medical Center.

The theme for the day was Community Organizations and Health.

Michele Neff and Dave Thomas, MSU Extension educators, provided the group with an overview of volunteers, and how they can be successfully used within the community.

Maureen Barney-McGuire gave an overview of the literacy program in the county and the role of the volunteers used in this program.

Joyce Swartzmiller of Beaverton talked about being a volunteer and working with volunteers.

The afternoon started with a power point presentation on “Leaders and Leadership” by Terry Moore, president, Mid Michigan Health Systems.

A panel discussion of Mary James, Department of Human Services; Dan Reed, Community and Mental Health; Jill Sutton, Mid Michigan Community Action Agency; and Kelly Conley, Central Michigan Health Department, gave the group an insight of what types of programs are available to county residents and how they work with volunteers.

Mark Bush, executive vice president of MidMichigan Medical Center-Gladwin, provided the group with a tour of the hospital and nursing home and gave them an overview of the health systems for Gladwin County.

A special appreciation also goes to MidMichigan Medical Center for the day long program as they provided the meals for the day.

Next month’s program “Education” will be at Beaverton High School.

For more information on Leadership Gladwin County, contact Bev Przystas, 989-426-7741, or check the web at <http://www.msue.msu.edu/gladwin>.

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December 20, 2006

**Empty arms, empty hearts: Second of three parts**

## Scared, living a lie

Pregnant teens found themselves on the run or hiding to spare their families the shame

**Marney Rich Keenan / The Detroit News**

Some teenage girls caught pregnant and unmarried in the 1950s to the early 1970s ran away rather than face the scorn and humiliation. Others broke the news to their parents behind closed doors. After tears and recriminations, the girls were pulled out of school and sequestered in maternity homes.

Those whose families could not afford maternity homes hid the pregnancies from the outside world under large sweat shirts or tent-like dresses. When going out, some recalled laying down in the back seat of the car.



Now, three and four decades later, these birth mothers are coming out of the adoption closet for the first time to tell how they gave up their babies under duress and how their grief has wreaked havoc in their lives since.

By giving voice to their long-held secrets, they hope to lay a path for healing, reform adoption laws and educate mental health professionals about their needs.

Their stories have a sad sameness. Wherever these girls were hidden while their bellies grew, the common thread was the elaborate stories the families wove to conceal the pregnancy. The postcards mailed from abroad, the ailing aunt who suddenly needed care, the apprenticeship too good to pass up were all ruses, of course, but better to live the lie than tell the truth. It wasn't just the girls' reputation at stake, but the whole family's standing in the community.

Ethel Vandenberg, 58, who now lives in Fife Lake, a small village near Grand Rapids, became pregnant in 1965 by a boy she says she loved very much. She was a 17-year-old high school senior and the boy was 16.

"I didn't even admit to myself that I was pregnant; it just couldn't be," she said. "My father would kill me. Just before Christmas vacation, my mom finally dragged me to the doctor. There was no doubt about it. I was six months already.

"My mind was disconnected from my body, probably from shock and fear. I had let my parents down. I had to stay out of school, and after exploring all the options, my father said that I had to give up my baby for adoption. It cost too much money to go to a home, so I stayed at home.

"I hid it well, telling no one at all. I spent most of my time in the utility room if company visited or my sister's friends came over. At least it was near the bathroom."

During her last trimester, Vandenberg says, she remained detached, not thinking about the baby inside her, although he kicked her like crazy. "It was for survival, I know now," she says. "And emotional self-protection because if I thought too hard, I would lose control."

On March 28, 1966, and already in labor, Vandenberg was dropped off at the emergency room entrance of the hospital. Hours later, she gave birth to a healthy baby boy, whom she never held, never touched.

"I have blanked out the trip to court to sign papers," she says. "I have no memory of that day."

Afterward, she says, "I became promiscuous and wild, drinking and feeling nothing. I even married a man after knowing him for a month and left him the next month. What a disaster."

In the decades to follow, Vandenberg finally married happily. But when she was hit with breast cancer and subsequent mastectomies, "none of it bothered me much," she says. "You see, I didn't feel much emotionally. I always thought, is this all there is?"

"I frequently prayed to God to forgive this horrible, worthless person for giving up my son without a fight. I still had periods of wildness and drinking, but my (present) husband stuck by me. I had no idea why I acted out so badly at times. But it was because I never grieved the loss of my son. They were right about getting over it. I didn't feel it at all, but I felt very little else, either."

In 1966, Mary Carolan was pregnant and 16, the summer before her senior year at St. Stephen's High School in Port Huron. Her mother was desperate for her to marry.

"My mother said to me, 'You're three months' pregnant and you've brought enough shame on the family. You're going to marry him,' " Carolan says. Her mother even purchased an engagement ring, handing it to Mary's boyfriend, Richard. "But I couldn't get married at 16. I just couldn't."

Instead, Carolan went to live with an older sister in Sterling Heights, where she kept house for her sister's family and helped care for her niece. Her mother said Carolan was away taking care of an ailing relative. The cover story didn't work. After Carolan delivered a baby at Mount Sinai Hospital in Detroit and returned home, she was taunted by former classmates who called her a whore.

Tina Caudill was 20 years old and pregnant in 1966. Then, working as a secretary in the central office of an automotive company in Detroit, she told her parents she had been transferred temporarily to St. Louis. She set up a post office box in St. Louis and got a subscription to the local paper so she could provide tidbits of local happenings in letters from her phantom new home.

In reality, Caudill been forced to quit her job once it was discovered she was unmarried and expecting. She spent the rest of her pregnancy as a contracted live-in domestic a few miles away from her home. She got room and board and was paid \$10 a week for light

housekeeping and helping to care for the family's two children.

"The thing that kills me is that I was good enough to take care of other people's children, but not good enough to take care of my own," Caudill says.

She never did tell her mother the truth about the child she put up for adoption. "It would have given her a nervous breakdown," Caudill says.

Donna Roth of Ann Arbor was 17 and a senior in high school when she got pregnant. Her parents shipped her off to California through an arrangement with a physician who was an infertility specialist and had arranged many adoptions. She lived for six months with a family, caring for a 10-year-old and 6-year-old.

Having the baby adopted out of town was not an uncommon practice, especially if the relationship between the birth parents was commonly known.

"When my daughter was born," Roth says, "I was told not to look at her. I never held her. My last look at her was bundled in pink and being carried out of the hospital by her mother and father. As merely conveyance for this beautiful baby girl, I watched all this in tears."

Kim Grayvold of Utica was a senior at Bishop Foley High School when she got pregnant and subsequently felt pressured to surrender her baby for adoption.

When she handed over her baby, "I honestly felt like I had lost a limb, like a part of me had been amputated," she says.

Barb Anderson Kari ran away from her Saline home to Boston in 1959 when she found out she was pregnant. "I couldn't walk around pregnant without a ring on my finger in those days," she says. "So, I just disappeared. I didn't tell my parents. I just ran off.

"Finally, my mother found out, and she flew out and we went to see a minister. He recommended a Salvation Army maternity home in Sharon, 22 miles outside of Boston. My mother said if I kept the baby, it could grow up being called a bastard on the playground and how would I like that?"

Before she left for the maternity home, Anderson Kari says, she was offered \$2,000 from her boss at the factory where she had been working.

"People would pay a lot of money for white babies; they were in such high demand. My boss even said I could get my job back afterwards if I'd sell it. Can you imagine selling your baby? I told him to shove it, or words to that effect."

These were the social pressures of the time facing Janet McDonald of Detroit and countless other young, unwed pregnant women.

When she returned home after trying to run away to California, McDonald says she was terrified. "I knew that what I'd done was going to change the balance and rapport in our family. I'd hurt my parents so badly; I didn't think they could ever love me anymore. And I had a little sister who was 11 years old at the time, and I thought she'd never look up to me again."

McDonald's mother took her to her first gynecological exam, where the pregnancy was confirmed, and then arranged for McDonald to stay at the St. Agnes Foundling Home in Kalamazoo.

"We had to devise a story in case neighbors wondered where I was for the summer," McDonald says. "Since the maternity home was housed in a hospital, we decided to say I had gone to work for a hospital for the experience. The plan was that as soon as the baby was born, I would go back to college, and no one would ever be the wiser."

She saw no option but to acquiesce to her parents' wishes. St. Agnes, run by nuns, was smaller than most maternity homes; it was actually a dormitory within the hospital with 13 beds and a small adjacent living room with a black and white TV.

But its rules and regulations were similar to those of most maternity homes of that era. The girls knew each other by first name only, no last names allowed. Mail was screened, and visits had to be preapproved. Outings were usually supervised. Going to the movie theater two blocks away from the hospital was a momentous occasion. Lights were out at 10 p.m. During the day, the girls were required to work in the hospital laundry room.

There were no prenatal or childbirth classes offered in most maternity homes. The girls knew little of what was going on with their bodies; many went into labor unprepared. McDonald's mother had given her books to read while she was expecting.

"I devoured them," McDonald says, "though they were a bit of a mixed blessing. I tried the exercises and the breathing techniques and a sense of pride began to emerge. I guess I thought I was helping my baby be healthy.

"But there was one book that made me sad because the woman in it was happily counting down the months, she had a husband and they both were so excited."

Much of McDonald's time alone was spent weaving fantasies. "Mom and Dad would see the baby and realize they had made a mistake," she says. "Or it would be a baby boy, and that would make Bobby (the baby's father) change his mind.

"Or what if it was a girl and it looked like me, it would be like giving up a piece of myself, and then I'd get all depressed. Honestly, most nights I just cried myself to sleep."

Her labor was fast -- four hours from start to finish. Again, the prevailing rule among hospital staff was to advise the new mother not to hold her newborn.

In some hospitals, mothers couldn't even see their babies. A sheet would be held up at the mother's chest to prevent a glimpse. Some of the mothers interviewed by The Detroit News said they were blindfolded. The reasoning was that if mother and child had no physical contact, no bond would form. The separation would have no lasting effects, and the baby could bond with a new mother.

But McDonald was insistent and convinced the nurses to allow her to hold her baby daughter, if only for a minute.

She studied her tiny little hands, whispered "I love you," and the baby was taken to the nursery. Later, she sneaked to the nursery and peered through the window. Someone had put a little bow on top of her daughter's head of black hair.

Four days later, McDonald walked out of the hospital, leaving her baby behind. She climbed into the back seat of her waiting parents' car. "I felt utterly empty," she says.

In the days that followed, a social worker began visiting McDonald at home while her daughter was put into foster care.

"Of course, adoption would be the best decision, of course," is all she'd say," McDonald remembers. "I was young and could get on with my life, she told me. It all felt like resignation.

"You know, I will never know what the strongest factor was: whether I felt guilty for shaming my family, or that everybody was telling me a baby needs two parents.

"All I know is that when I was alone, I felt I had no other choice, no other option. I can't say I was convinced that it was the best thing for my baby. But the whole world was convinced it was, and I just couldn't fight the whole world."

When McDonald returned to college that fall, she had no interest in studying or classes. "College was simply something I had to fulfill in order to someday make sense of what had happened," she says.

Not long into her fall semester, she decided to look up a roommate at St. Agnes who was also a student at EMU. She was a pretty blonde girl who had given her baby up for adoption a few months before her.

McDonald was hoping to renew their friendship so maybe they could help each other through their shared experience.

"She pretended not to know anything about what I was talking about," McDonald says. "I was stunned."

*You can reach Marney Rich Keenan at (313) 222-2515 or [mkeenan@detnews.com](mailto:mkeenan@detnews.com).*

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#### **Day 1: Tuesday**

Decades later, women forced to give up their "illegitimate children" for adoption still feel the pain.

#### **Day 2: Today**

Women recall the fear and shame of being sent away to give birth and return "as if it never happened."

#### **Day 3: Thursday**

Reunions put birth mothers and the children they gave away on an emotional rollercoaster.

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## New home is sought for woman

Mom charged with abuse of disabled daughter, 22

**FLINT**

**THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION**

Wednesday, December 20, 2006

**By Ron Fonger**

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FLINT - Now that a 43-pound disabled woman has been taken from her mother because of abuse allegations, social workers are dealing with the short-term fallout:

Finding a new home for the 22-year-old, who Genesee County Prosecutor David Leyton said has mental and physical disabilities and requires around-the-clock personal care.

Leyton's office already is talking to the state Department of Human Services about where the woman will go when she leaves Hurley Medical Center.

"There are things we don't know. It's early, (and) we're still trying to put it together," said Leyton. "We're still trying to put together where she can go."

Flint police found the disabled woman on a mattress stained with urine and feces in the home of her mother, Theresa E. Terrell, one week ago.

Investigators said the woman was malnourished, weighing just 43 pounds, and was clothed in four soiled diapers and a T-shirt. They charged Terrell with second-degree voluntary adult abuse.

Terrell appeared at a pretrial hearing Tuesday, and Flint District Judge Ramona M. Roberts scheduled a preliminary hearing for Jan. 3.

Her attorney, Neil Szabo, said his client's daughter suffers from cerebral palsy, which refers to any one of a number of neurological disorders that appear in infancy or early childhood and permanently affect body movement and muscle coordination, according to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke.

Leyton said his office is working with DHS to place Terrell's daughter in a licensed adult foster care home.

Adult foster care homes are residential homes that provide 24-hour personal care, protection and supervision for individuals who are developmentally disabled, elderly, mentally ill or physically handicapped and who cannot live alone but do not need continuous nursing care.

Sheryl Thompson, director of the county DHS, would not discuss the case because of privacy laws, but said her agency responds quickly when there are allegations of abuse.

"We will work cooperatively with the police and the prosecutor's office," Thompson said.

### QUICK TAKE

Protecting vulnerable adults

- State law protects vulnerable adults who are abused, neglected or exploited.
- Abuse is defined as harm or threatened harm to an adult's health or welfare caused by another person, such as hitting.
- Neglect is defined as harm to an adult's health or welfare caused by the conduct of another person, such as leaving a physically disabled person in a dangerous situation.
- Exploitation is defined as the misuse of an adult's money, property or personal dignity by another person.

- To report abuse, neglect or exploitation of a vulnerable adult, call the state Department of Human Services at (800) 996-6228.

Source: State Department of Human Services

Other family members can be considered as potential caregivers, Thompson said, provided they didn't witness abuse or neglect and allow it to continue.

DHS Protective Services workers make face-to-face contact with reported abuse victims within 24 hours of allegations, she said.

"We take reports of (abuse of a vulnerable adult) just as serious as we do complaints about children," Thompson said.

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## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Welfare system discriminates against single males

Tuesday, December 19, 2006

By Stephen M. Basly

My question is, how, as a single male, do you even get welfare assistance in Michigan?

As I read the headlines I see that state lawmakers are limiting welfare to four years. What are they doing for those who fall through the cracks?

Just try being a single, down-on-your-luck male in Michigan and see what kind of assistance you receive.

I am an unemployed, former programmer/analyst with some graphic design skills.

Several years ago I lost my job when the company I worked for went bankrupt.

I have not been able to find work in my field. I have accepted work at lower positions when possible.

I have been out of work for five months now, and have no unemployment benefits. I've exhausted my life savings.

One obstacle I encounter is that local staffing agencies do not want to pass on my application or resume, stating I am overqualified! Overqualified or not, I need to pay the rent and eat, but it seems that no one cares.

I am three months behind on my rent and about to be evicted. My landlord has been more than patient. I sought help through the Michigan Department of Human Services. They were able to help me with some food stamp assistance and with my gas and heating bills, for which I am thankful.

However, as far as I can tell, there is nothing that can be done to help a single, unemployed male with any rental assistance! Upon inquiry, I find if I had children it might be a different story, but as a single male I am out of luck.

When I asked my caseworker how can I get help, I was first told I need to be served with an eviction notice. Then I was told that unless I had an income, they could not help me in spite of the eviction notice. To which I replied, "If I had an income, I would not need help!" The caseworker said they could at least help me catch up on my rent in that case. I then was told I would need to make at least \$200 per week gross income before I could be considered for help, that an eviction notice must be served, and that the most they would be able to assist me with is a one-time \$410 rental payment.

I said I am not looking for a handout. Are there any kind of work programs where I can work off any assistance received? He said there were not.

There are programs for those just out of prison. Programs to get them into a job and even provide them with transportation. For me, there is nothing available.

I then asked what will happen to me. I was told, "Well, I guess that is why we have homeless."

I've lived and worked and paid taxes in this state for more than 30 years. I've helped to support and fund many of the programs in place through my taxes, but now when I need help, I cannot get any!

I am looking for work and will accept work. Even with my education and background, I am unable to find any work in this geographical area. What is worse I cannot afford to even leave the area to find work

elsewhere.

This may be my last e-mail as I will soon be losing phone and Internet services as well as my dwelling. I have no place to turn. Unless something is done, I will be one of the homeless on the street -- a burden. I can see why some might turn to crime as a way to get off the street!

My eyes are open. I never thought I would be in this position. My circumstances can befall anyone out there in the middle class. In a flash, everything can be gone.

So, again my question is: What welfare program? And how do I get to apply?

Stephen M. Basly resides

in Kalamazoo.

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# THE BAY CITY TIMES

## Grants will provide boost for Do-All Inc.

Tuesday, December 19, 2006

By RYAN J. STANTON

TIMES WRITER

Christmas may have come early this year for Do-All Inc.

The nonprofit agency, located at 1400 S. Lincoln St., has received two grants - each in the amount of \$20,000 - and agency leaders plan to put both gifts to good use this coming year.

A \$20,000 grant from the Kantzler Foundation will serve as start-up funds for a new Do-All coffee shop inside the Alice and Jack Wirt Public Library, 500 Center Ave.

Another \$20,000 grant from the Bay Area Community Foundation will go toward Do-All's material assistance center, a new operation this year that took over the former services of Created for Caring.

"We all know the need in Bay County," Ashley Morse, program officer for the Community Foundation, said of her organization's grant.

Do-All, a United Way agency, provides community service and job opportunities for people with developmental disabilities.

The agency recently launched a new thrift shop, called The Cat's Meow, inside a former grocery store building at 1465 W. Center Ave. The agency has packed the 34,000-square-foot space with thrifty items, a children's play area, a Habitat for Humanity "re-store" and the material assistance center.

Since opening in September, the thrift shop has seen \$36,000 in sales, said Robin Devereaux, director of community programs.

"We have some really great stuff - anything you can think of," she said. "It's like a department store, but it's thrift and it's the biggest one around."

Through its material assistance center, Do-All has been meeting the material needs of many throughout the region - collecting donated items like clothing, furniture and appliances and redistributing them to families in need.

Devereaux said donated items have been pouring in faster than her staff can keep up with, but not every need is met.

"We have 100 folks waiting for beds," she said. "No one knew there was this much need for beds in this community."

Do-All gets many referrals from the Department of Human Services, churches and even teachers who notice children in need.

"This project is huge if you think about it," Devereaux said, reminding herself that she has just one employee working 30 hours a week as the material assistance coordinator.

It's helped that several workers who lost their jobs when Created for Caring closed have since come to Do-All to volunteer, she said, though the agency could use more help.

Groups looking for a one-day volunteer activity are encouraged to call the agency.

"I could use them big time," Devereaux said, noting that the agency plans to have an upcoming "painting party" to cover the old orange and green walls of the store with a fresh coat of paint.

Do-All also is looking for individuals to pair up with some of the agency's developmentally disabled workers inside the thrift store - to be a "job buddy."

Some of those same special-needs workers will be put to work inside Do-All's proposed coffee shop, which could be up and running in January, Devereaux said. The coffee shop is expected to replace The Harvest Cafe, whose owners pulled out of the Wirt library last month to move to a new location.

Dominic Monastiere, president of the Kantzler Foundation, said his foundation supports the Do-All coffee shop as a way of helping people with special needs.

"We just wanted to be supportive of anything they could do to help their client base," he said.

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